

ISSUE 3

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Imagine





17 July 1978
Berkeley, CA

Craig Russell returns, bearing the gift of his fantastic art. Mikes Vosburg and Gilbert, Lee Marrs and Masaichi Mukaide return with various interesting perspectives. What more could you ask?

Well, we've got that, too. Mickey Schwaberow (remember his "stained glass" story in STAR*REACH #9) has returned to grace our pages with the beginning of a fairy-tale-like epic story entitled "Nebula" that has me charmed. Mickey brings a new type of story altogether, drawn much in the style of children's graphic literature, but containing characters and a story line that grown-up kids like ourselves can enjoy. Plans are to continue his story in a title all its own either later this year or early next, depending on his drawing schedule and our finances.

We hope you enjoy the direction IMAGINE has been taking. The only way we can find out, though, is if you write. And if you're into ego-boosting, there's always the chance you'll see it printed in our new lettercol on our inside back cover. So do it.

And don't forget our new address.

Mike Friedrich

IMAGINE #3 (August, 1978) is published quarterly by Star*Reach Productions, P.O. Box 2328, Berkeley, CA 94702; Mike Friedrich, editor and publisher. © copyright 1978 Star*Reach Productions. World rights reserved. Front cover art and the story "The Avatar and the Chimera" ©1978 P. Craig Russell. "Songs to Aging Children Come" ©1978 Mike Vosberg and Paul Levitz. "The Spider Thread" ©1978 Michael T. Gilbert and Dorothy Bucher. "Vignette: A Soft and Gentle Rain" ©1978 Michael T. Gilbert. Address all inquiries c/o Star*Reach Productions.

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ANY SIMILARITY TO REAL PERSONS, LIVING OR DEAD, EXCEPT FOR PURPOSES OF SATIRE, IS COINCIDENTAL.

IN THE POOL
OF BLOOD AT
THE VERY
BOTTOM OF
HELL WHERE
IT IS AS DARK
AS NIGHT (BUT
SOMETIMES
THERE CAN BE
SEEN ETERNAL
FIRE) ARE TOR-
TURED DEAD
SINNERS
STRUGGLING
AND SQUIRMING
LIKE DYING
FROGS CHOKED
WITH BLOOD.

ONE DAY, KANDATA, ONE OF
THESE DEAD SINNERS, SAW
A SILVERY WHITE THREAD
SLIPPING GRADUALLY DOWN
TOWARD HIM, TRAILING A
SLENDER, GLIMMERING
RAY OF LIGHT.

The SPIDER THREAD

IT IS THE THREAD
OF A SPIDER. THIS
THREAD MAY BE
CONTINUED ABOVE
THE TOP OF HELL.

IF I COULD BUT
CLING TO THIS
THREAD AND
CLIMB UP HIGHER
AND HIGHER TO
ITS VERY STARTING
POINT, I WOULD
SURELY GET OUT
OF HELL.



STORY & ART BY MASAICH MUKAIDE, INSPIRED BY ATUTAGAMA'S SHORT STORY.
©1978 MASAICH MUKAIDE. LETTERED BY MARY GORDON.

WITH THIS IDEA IN HIS MIND, KANDATA GRASPED THE THREAD TIGHTLY IN BOTH HANDS AND INSTANTLY BEGAN PULLING HIMSELF UP HAND OVER HAND WITH ALL HIS MIGHT.

CLIMBING UP THE THREAD, KANDATA REMEMBERED HE HAD ONCE SPARED A SPIDER WHICH WAS STRUGGLING FROM MISSING ITS LEGS. HE THOUGHT THIS WAS THE **REWARD** FOR HIS GOOD DEED.



CLINGING FAST TO THE DANGLING THREAD, AND LOOKING DOWN BELOW, HE SAW THE POOL OF BLOOD FAR BELOW HIS FEET.

IF THINGS GO WELL, BY GOOD LUCK I MAY POSSIBLY BE ABLE EVEN TO GET INTO PARADISE.

BUT THEN,
TIGHTENING
THE THREAD,
KANDATA
LOOKED DOWN
BELOW HIMSELF.

THOUSANDS
OF DEADLY
SINNERS
WERE LIKEWISE
GRASPING AT
THE THREAD
AND WERE
CLIMBING UP
IT LIKE ANTS.

HE SHOOK THE
THREAD HARD
TO DROP THEM
--TO THE LAST
MAN.

THIS IS
TERRIBLE.
THIS DELICATE
THREAD WILL
BREAK FROM
THE WEIGHT OF
THOUSANDS.

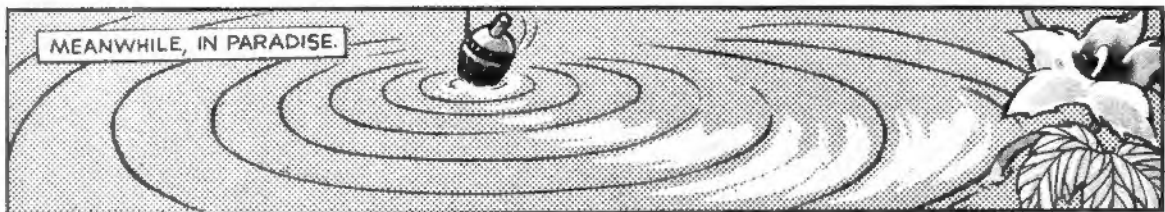
BASTARDS!
GET OFF!
THIS THREAD'S
MINE!
ALL OF YOU
GET OFF!

SUDDENLY...

AND KANDATA FELL INTO
THE SAME HELL INTO WHICH
HE HAD DOOMED THE OTHER
THOUSANDS OF SINNERS.



MEANWHILE, IN PARADISE.



DAMN! I FAILED TO FISH
UP A BIG ONE FROM HELL.

TOO BAD, I'M DYING OF
HUNGER AWAITING YOUR
CATCH.



END

THIS IS THE WORLD IN WHICH MAURICE RAKSHASAR WALKS...
A SMALL SLICE OF ANYWHERE, MUCH THE SAME AS ANY
OTHER TOWN...

IT HAS A LIBRARY (WHERE
MAURICE SPENDS HIS DAY
PLACING UNREAD BOOKS
BACK ON THE SHELVES).

IT HAS A TOWN HALL (WHERE
THE MAYOR SPENDS HIS
DAY WAITING TO BE RE-
ELECTED).

IT HAS A COUNCIL
(WHERE THE MEM-
BERS SPEND THEIR
DAY SELLING THE
TOWN).

IT HAS A PARK
(WHERE WORKMEN
SPEND THEIR DAY
GATHERING TOOLS
OF MECHANIZED
DESTRUCTION).

IT EVEN HAS A
MILLIONAIRE,
JAMES MCKINDREN.
A MAN WITH A PLAN.

THIS IS THE WORLD IN WHICH MAURICE
RAKSHASAR WALKS...
A WORLD WHERE
THE PEACE OF A
PARK IS AN EAGERLY
AWAITED RESPITE
FROM THE PETTY
HUMILIATIONS OF
THE DAY.

TOMORROW HE WILL
FINALLY BUY THE PARK
FROM THE COUNCIL
AT THE TOWN HALL...
AND THEN HE WILL
BUILD HIS FACTORY
THERE.

BUT THIS IS NOT
THE WORLD IN
WHICH MAURICE
RAKSHASAR
LIVES.

FOR MAURICE RAKSHASAR
LIVES IN A WORLD OF MAGIC
TO WHICH NO ONE ELSE IS
ADMITTED.

AT LEAST,
NOT YET.

SONGS...

THE WORLD IN WHICH CECILIA SCHLABOTSKI LIVES IT'S A PRETTY WORLD, FILLED WITH PARTIES AND PARKS.

AND SHE'S DECIDED THAT IF THE PARK'S NOT GOING TO BE A PART OF HER WORLD, NEITHER IS SHE.

WHAT--??

HEY--YOU
CAN'T
DO THAT!

To aging children come...

STORY/PICTURES • MIKE VOSBURG WORDS • PAUL LEVITZ

For Battle Creek & Eagle Lake



HUHH...?

THAT'S IT--
DROP THE BOTTLE.
YOU DIDN'T WANT
TO DO IT, NOT
REALLY!



I...I DIDN'T CHANGE
MY MIND.

I JUST
DROPPED
THE
BOTTLE.



AND NOW IT'S
RUINED.
I MISSED THE
MOMENT.

WHAT
MOMENT?



THE PROPER MOMENT
FOR MY SACRIFICE. I
THOUGHT MAYBE I
COULD TRADE MY LIFE--

--FOR
THE PARK.



COMMITTING
SUICIDE DOES
NOTHING --
IT JUST ENDS
HOPE!

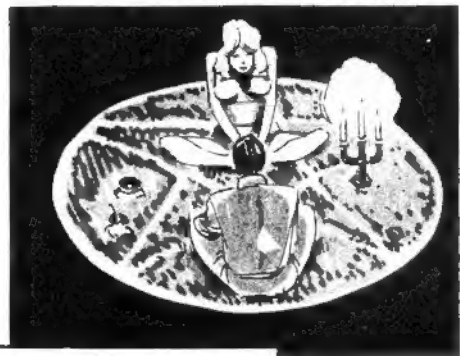


MAYBE I HAVE A
BETTER ANSWER...
A CEREMONY THAT
MIGHT MAKE A
DIFFERENCE.

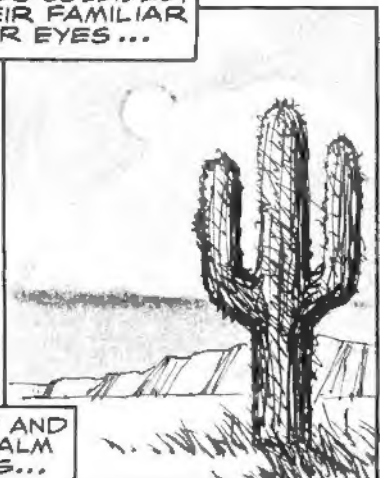
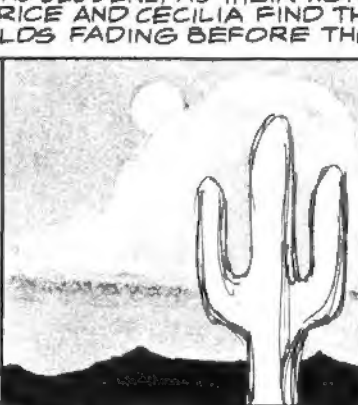
I'VE BEEN STUDYING
THE OCCULT FOR
MANY YEARS...



...AND THAT'S
HOW WE CAN SAVE
THIS PARK.



THEN, AS SUDDENLY AS THEIR WORLDS COLLIDED, MAURICE AND CECILIA FIND THEIR FAMILIAR WORLDS FADING BEFORE THEIR EYES...



...AND IN THE COILING INCENSE AND BEWITCHING SMOKE, THE REALM OF SORCERY APPEARS...

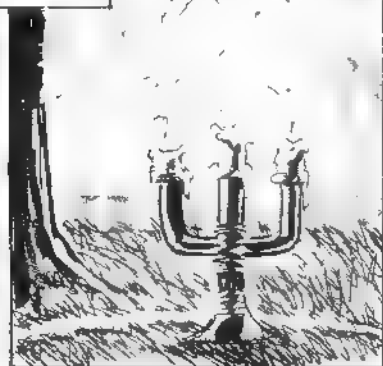
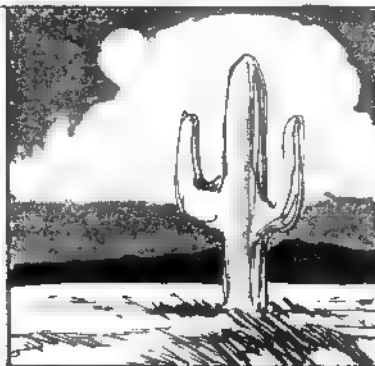
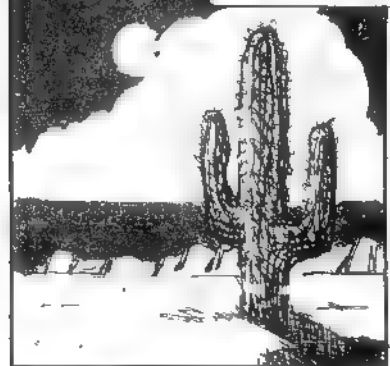








BUT THIS WORLD OF SPIRITS IS A TRANSIENT ONE...AND AS SUNRISE DISPELS THE LAST FADING WISPS OF SMOKE, THE LAST OF IT DISAPPEARS AS WELL...



NOON. THE COUNCIL MEN STAND, PAPERS AND PENS IN HAND, WAITING FOR THE MOMENT OF SALE... WHILE CARING PEOPLE WISH AND UNCARING MACHINES WATCH.

AT THE STROKE OF 12, A LONG CAR PULLS UP...



... AND JAMES MCKINDREN REACHES FOR THE PEN.



CROSS YOUR TOES, MAURICE-- THIS IS IT!

H-HE TOOK THE PEN, CECILIA.



SIGN HERE, RIGHT--

--eh, WHAT'S THAT?



A BULLDOZER GLINTING IN THE SUN, NOTHING MORE.



OR, PERHAPS, A MEMORY... OF A TIME THAT NEVER WAS.



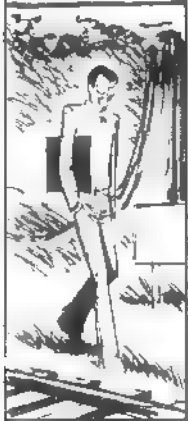
HEY--WE DID I-- UMPHHH

FACTORY'S A STUPID IDEA, ANY-- HOW...DON'T KNOW WHY I EVER THOUGHT OF IT!

MUST BE A BETTER IDEA... SOMETHING MORE PRO- DUCTIVE!



THIS IS THE
WORLD IN
WHICH
MAURICE
RAKSHASAR
WALKS...



A SMALL SLICE
OF ANYWHERE,
BUT NOT QUITE
THE SAME AS
ANY OTHER
TOWN.



IT HAS A
SOUL,
THIS
TOWN...

...AS DOES THE
CHIEF ENGINEER
OF ITS PLAY-
GROUND, A RE-
TIRED MILLIONAIRE
NAMED JAMES
McKINDREN.



A HAPPY
MAN.

HEY, MAGIC MAN,
WHAT'S IN THE
CASE TONIGHT?

I'VE GOT
SOME NEW
POTIONS THEY
MIGHT BE WHAT
WE NEED TO
FINALLY GET
US BACK TO
THE SPIRIT
WORLD!



WELL, DON'T
HESITATE...
SIGH... PUT
ME UNDER
YOUR
SPELL!



THIS IS THE WORLD OF
MAURICE AND CECILIA...

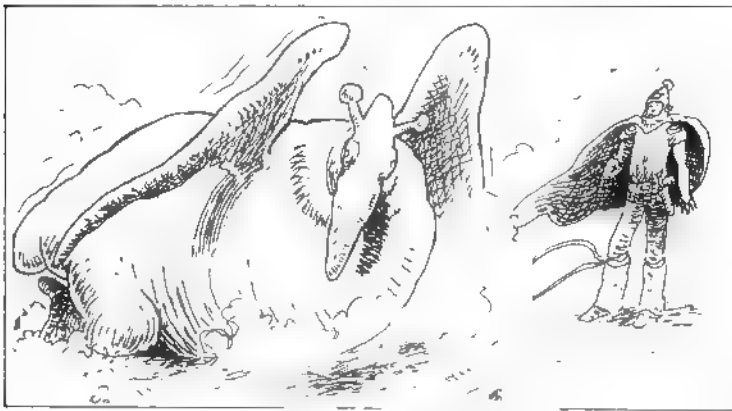
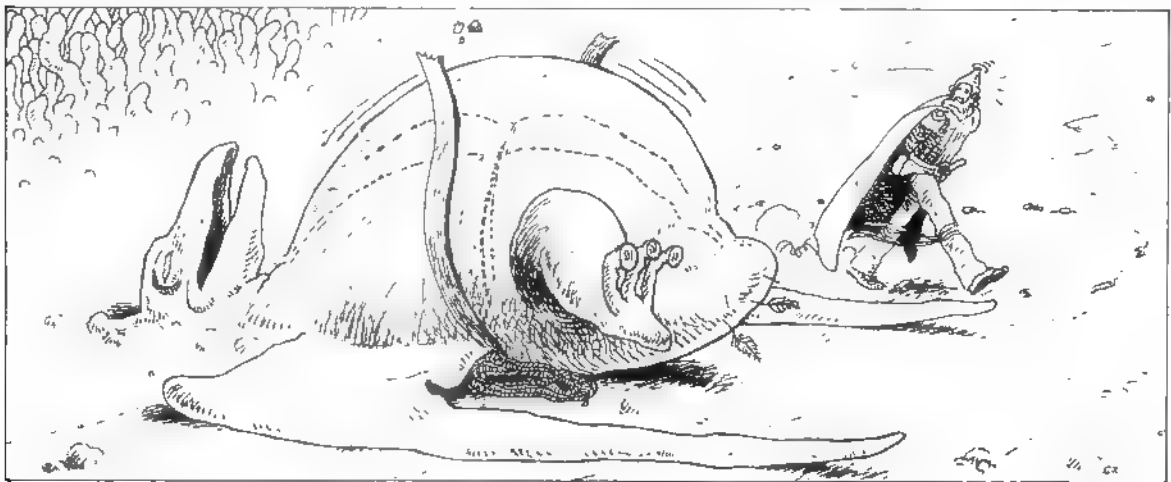
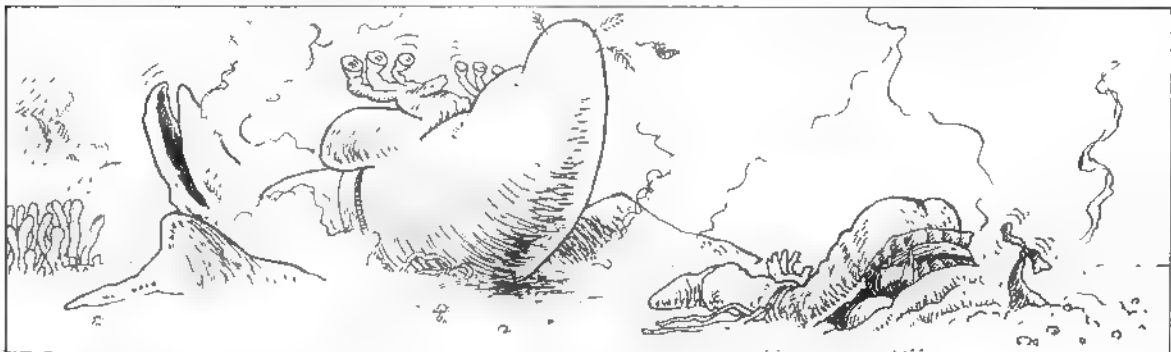
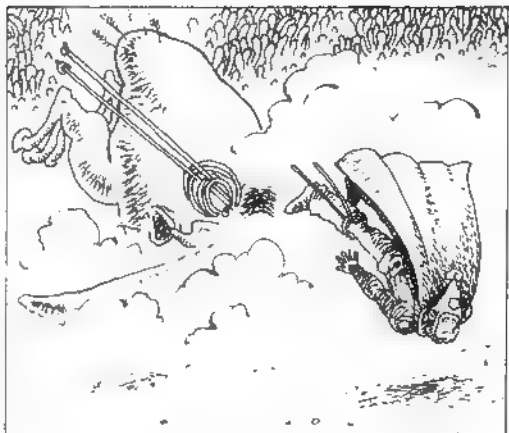
A WORLD NOT
MUCH DIFFERENT
FROM OUR OWN...
JUST ONE OF
MANY SMALL
ISLANDS TUCKED
AWAY IN SECLUDED
CORNERS OF THE
SHADOWY LANDS
OF THE
SORCERERS.

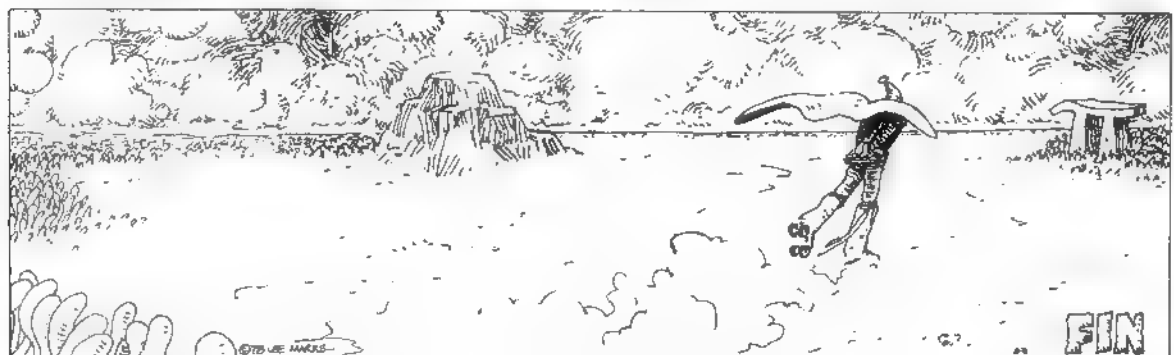
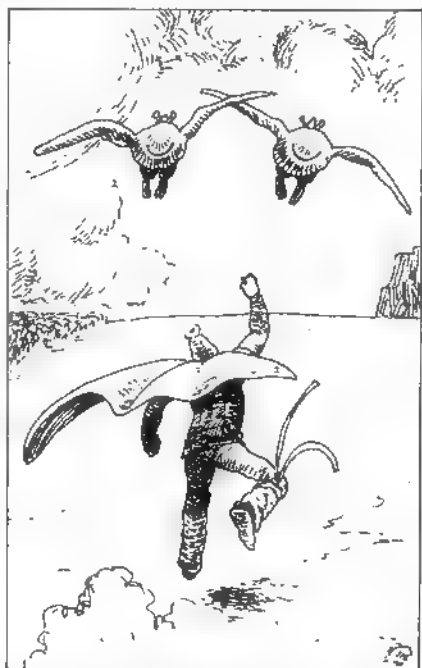
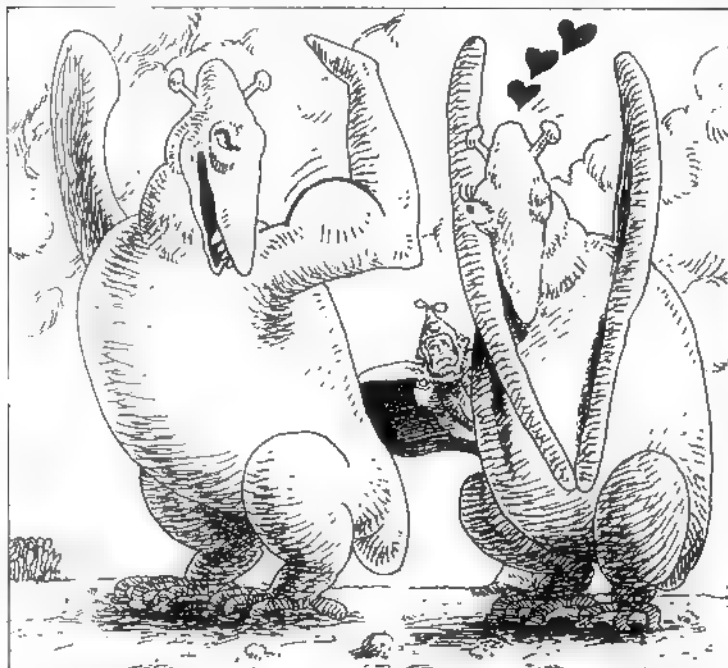
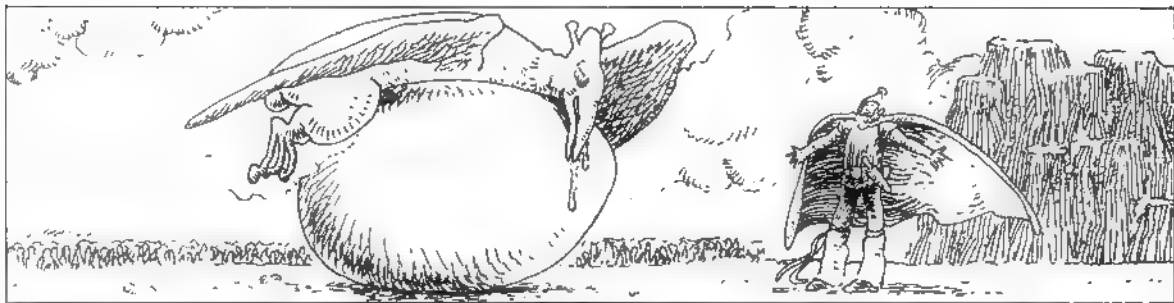


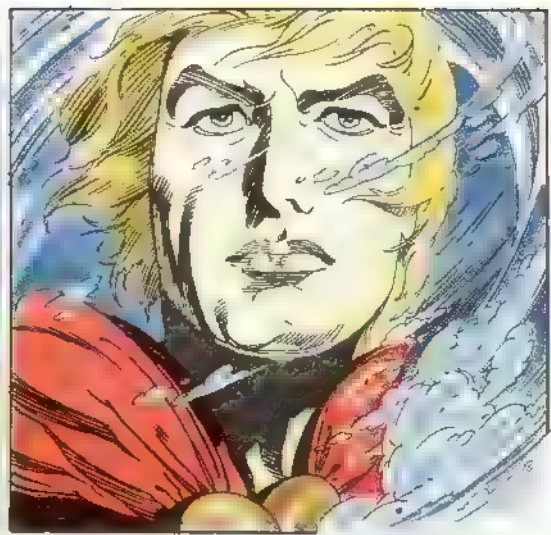
FADING
OUT...

ERSATZ

BY LEE MARRS-
WITH BEST REGARDS
-TO MOEBIUS-



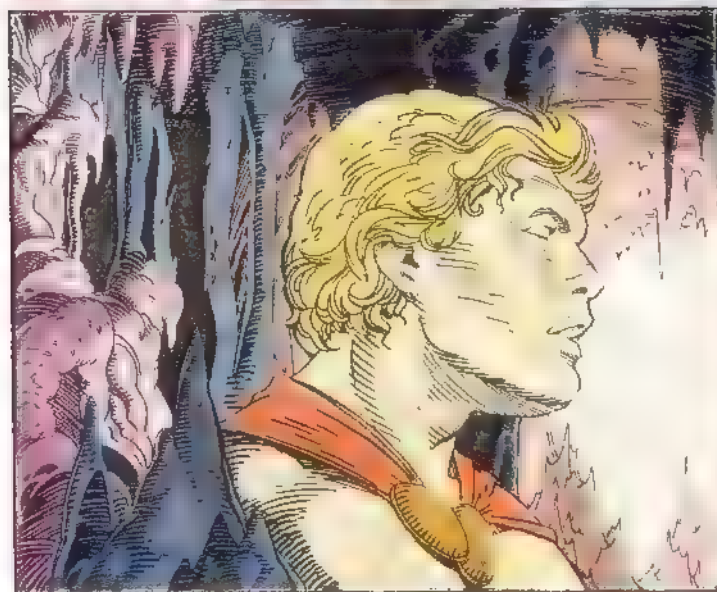
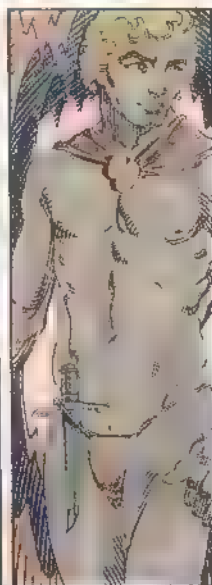
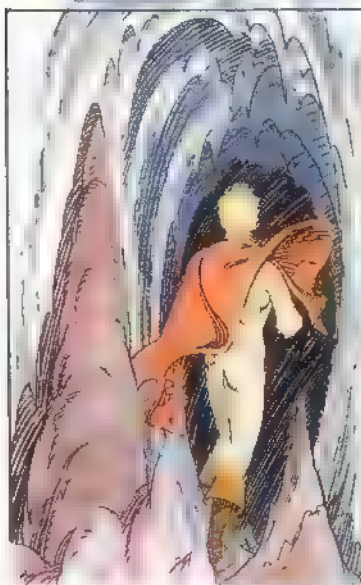
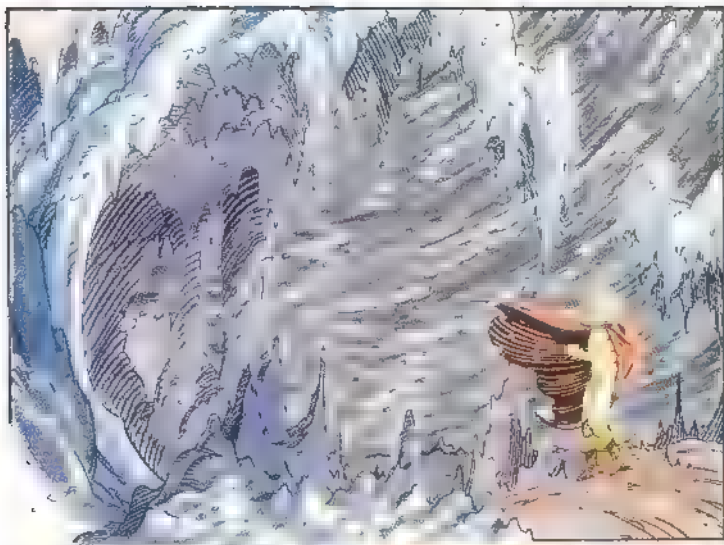


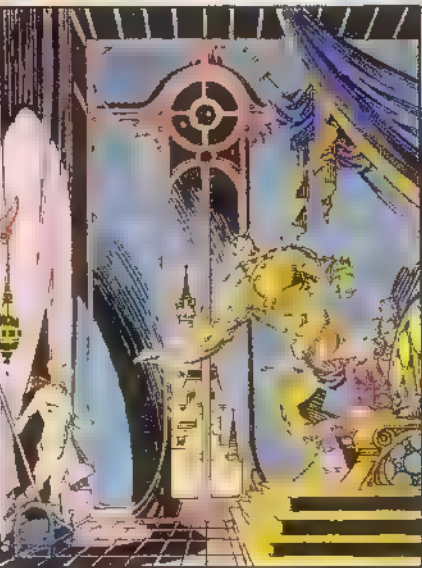
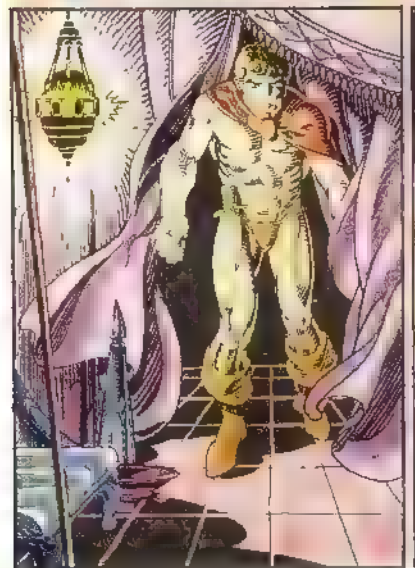
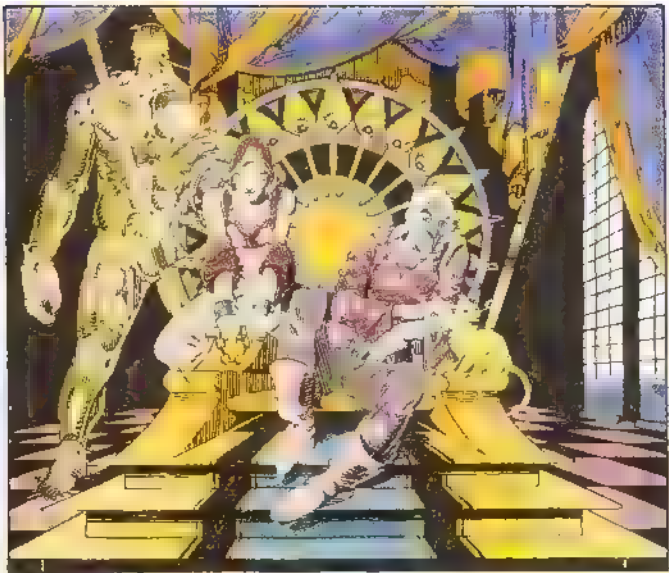


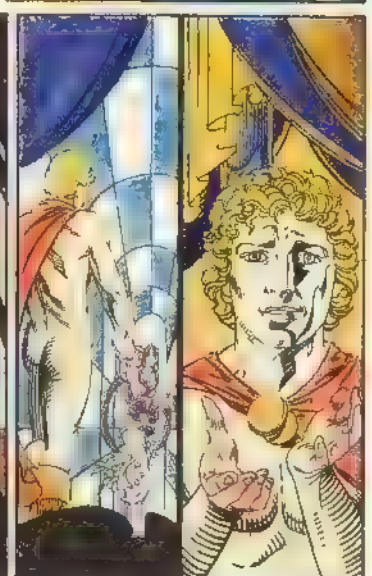
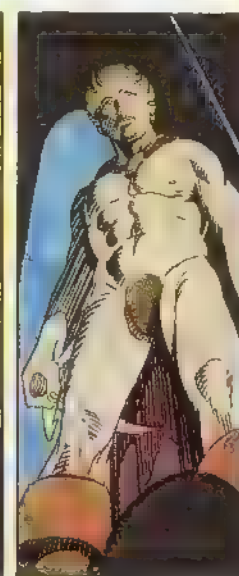
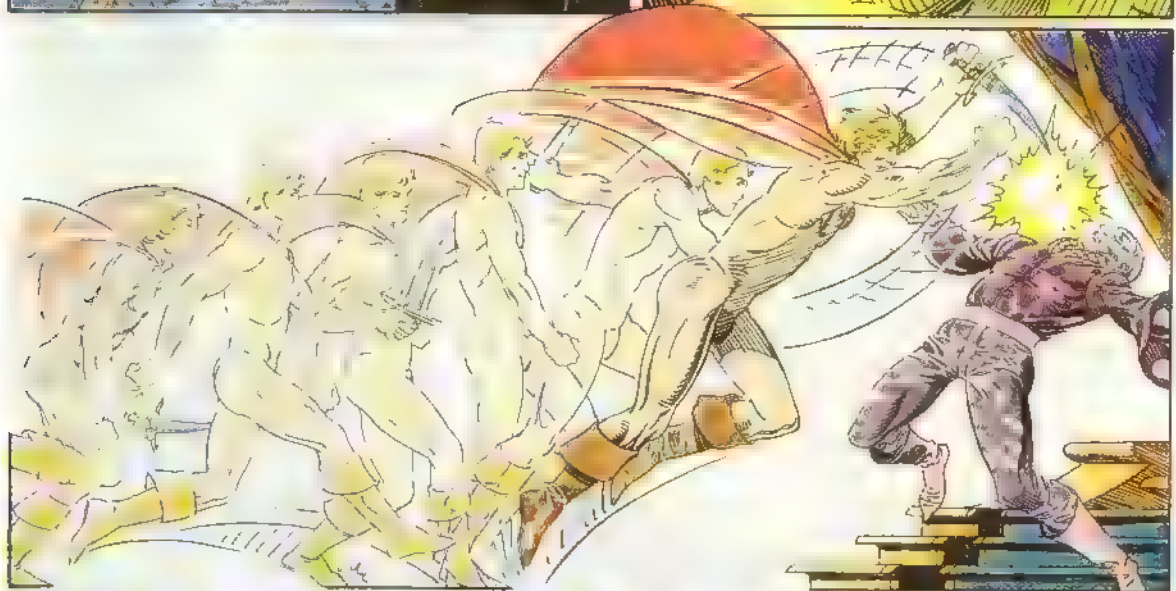
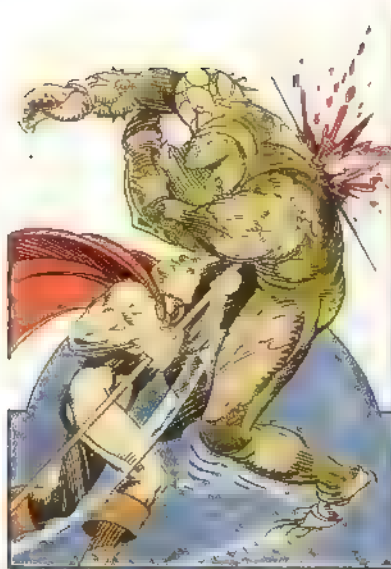
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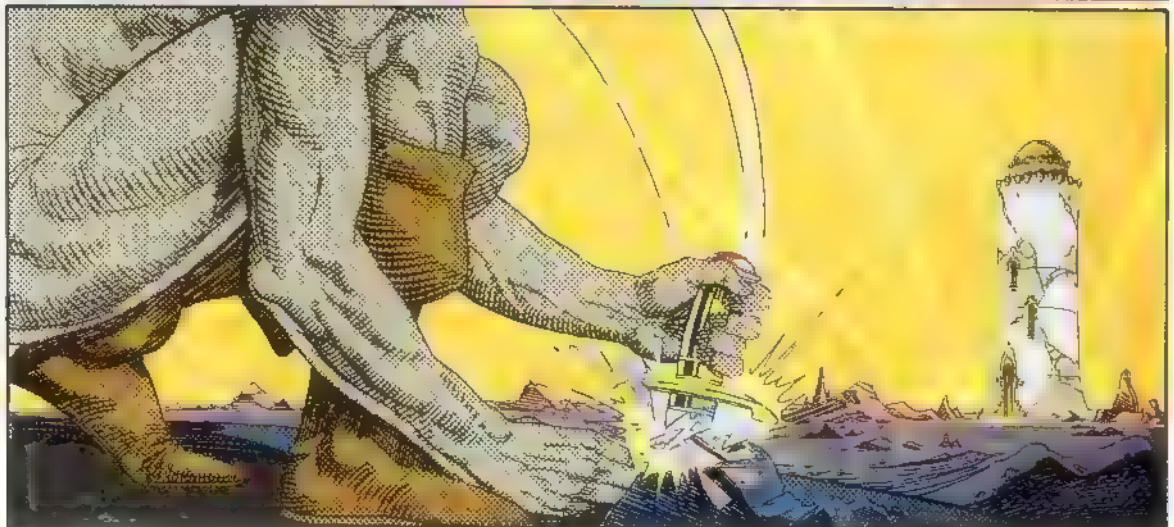
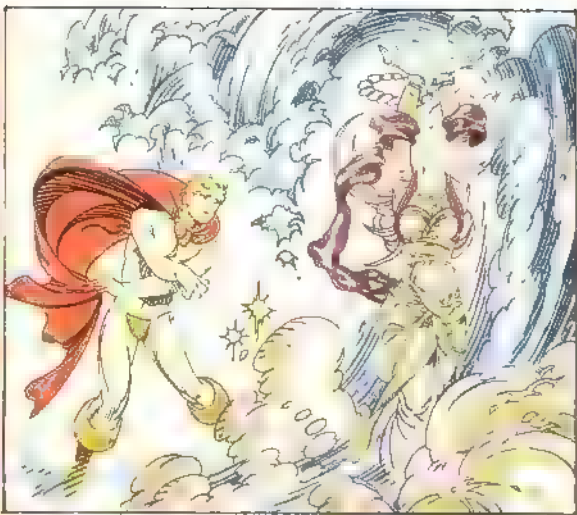
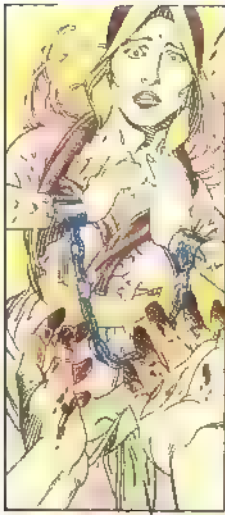
Underwater. The Avatar regains his senses. A swirl of mist. He finds himself in a snow-covered world of ice. He makes his way to a cave where he finds the remains of the demon captor. He enters. The demon's body attacks and is impaled on a spear. The Avatar reaches the demon's body and extends his bloody hands to the Chimera. The Chimera's horrified expression and the cave and the land of ice are swept away. The Avatar is left on a sun-baked plain alone. In disgust, he smashes the knife and rejects the way of the mindless barbarian. A tower rises out of the sun and, with his key, he crosses its threshold. There is a shield and a suit of golden armor. He doesn't Transfigured, he rises from the crashing waves and by the pounding sea is reunited with the fully materialized Chimera. They sail across the sea and into the sun.

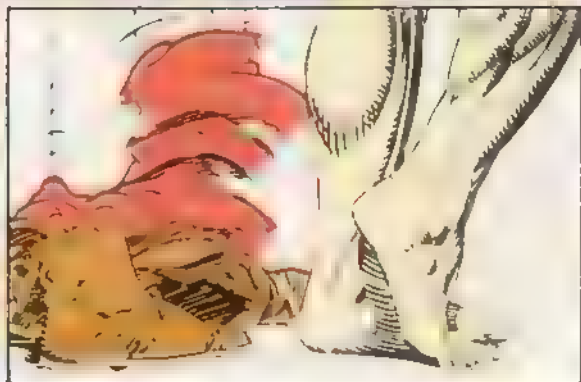
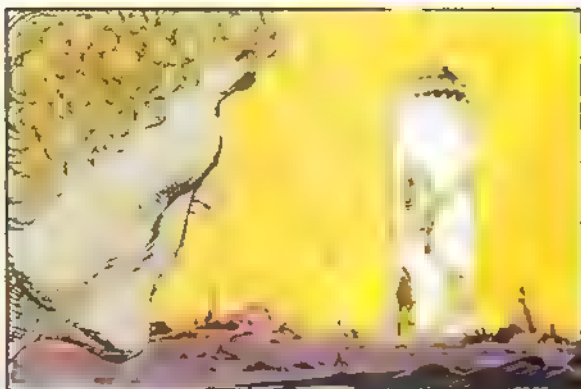


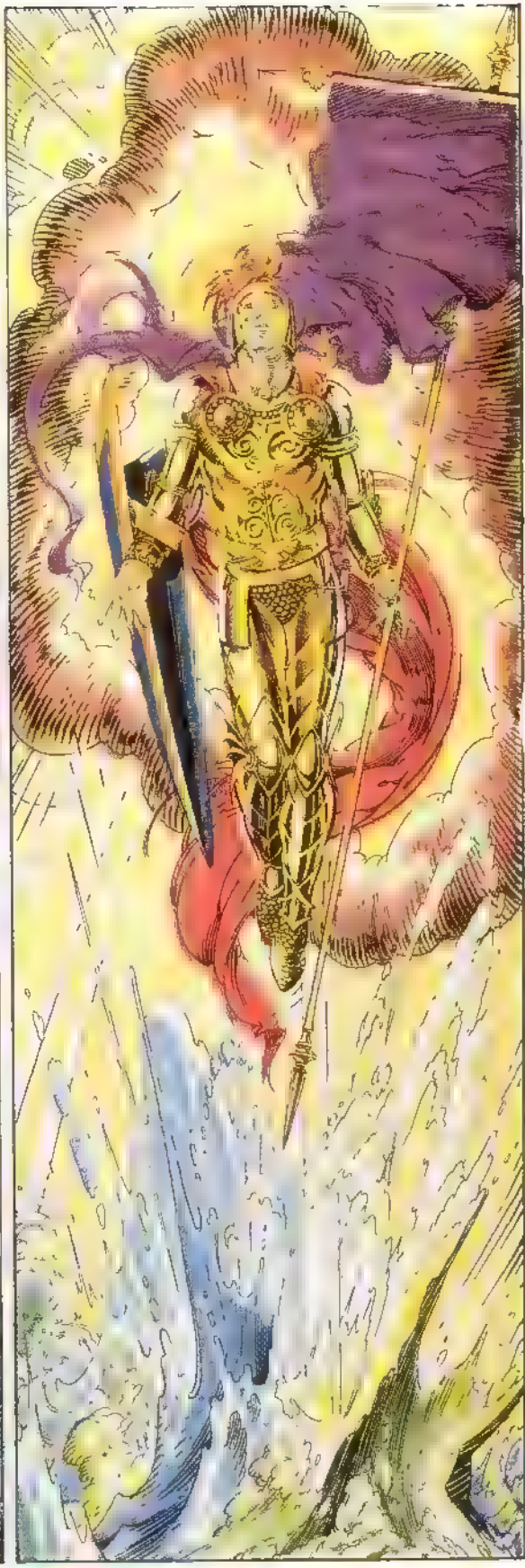
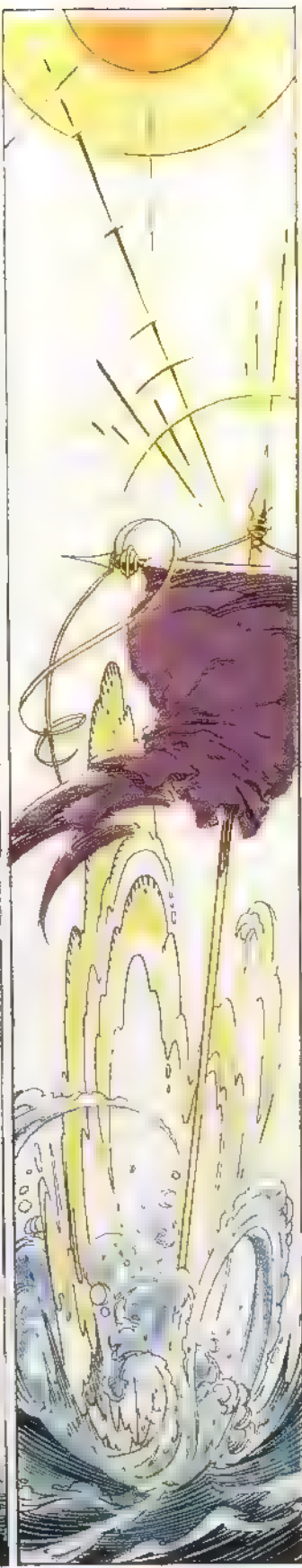


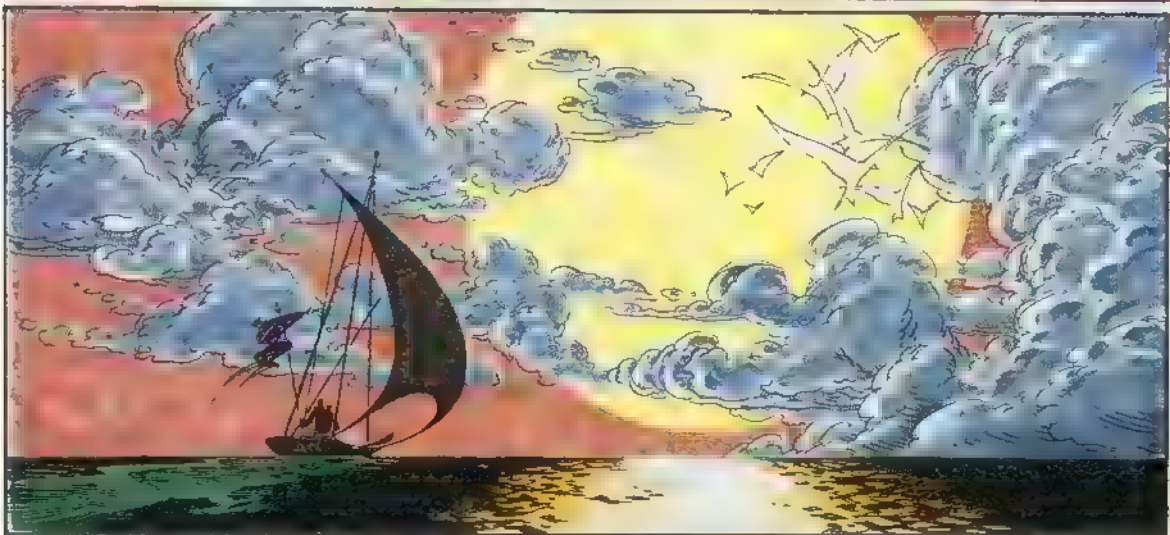
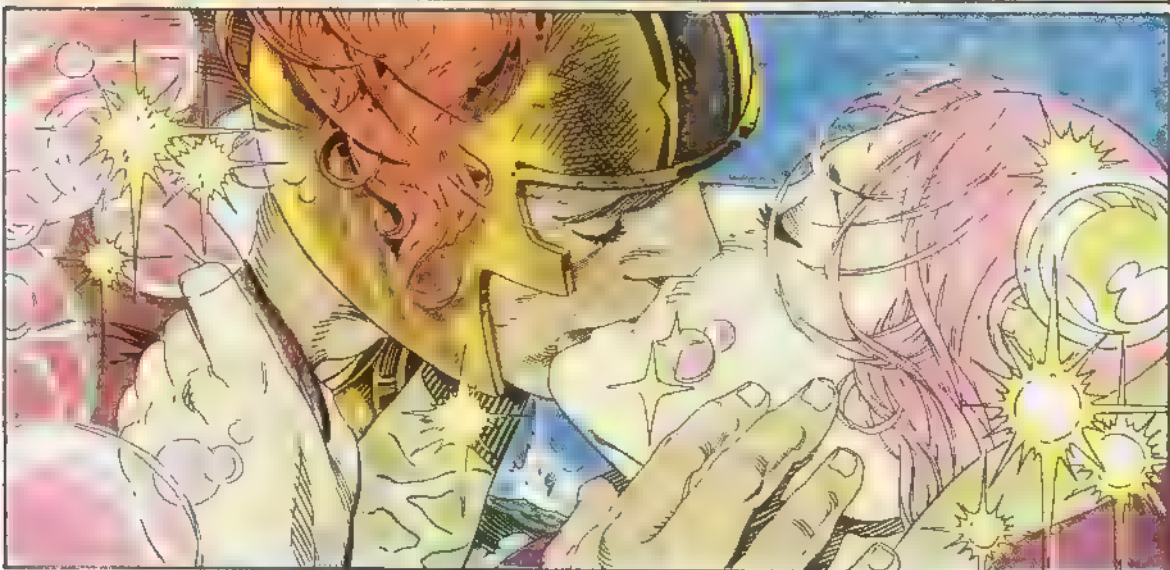
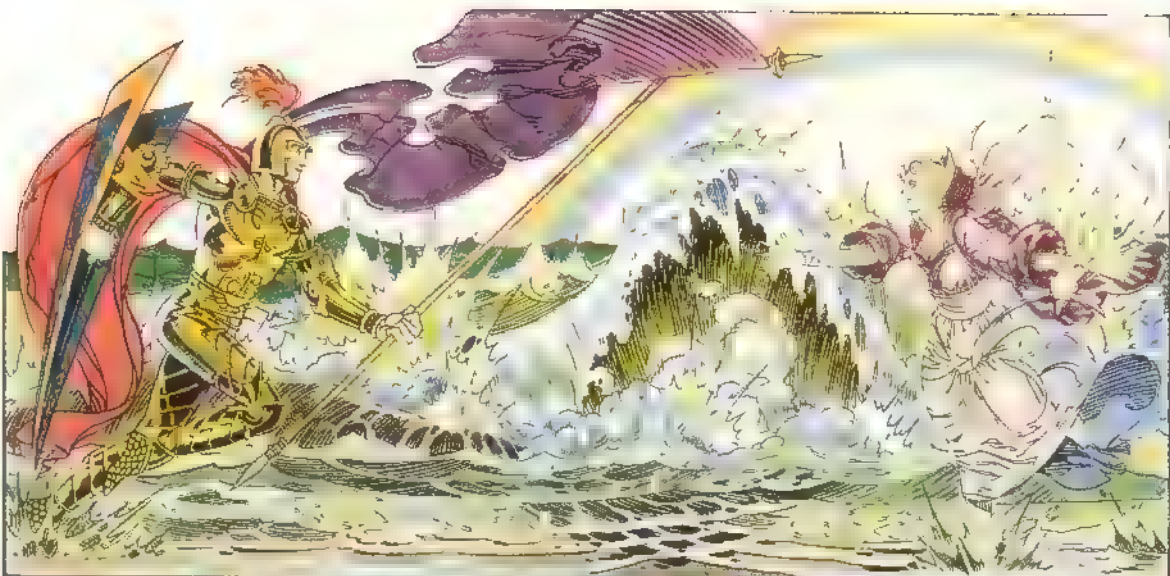












BY MEANS OF ART WE ARE SOMEWHAT MESSENGERS - DIM BRIEFLY REVEALATIONS UNATTAINABLE BY REASON
 LIKE THAT LITTLE MIRROR IN THE FAIRY TALES - LOOK INTO IT AND YOU WILL SEE NOT YOURSELF BUT FOR A MOMENT
 THAT WHICH PASSETH UNDERSTANDING A REALM TO WHICH NO MAN CAN RIDE OR FLY AND FOR WHICH THE SOUL BEGINS TO ACHIEVE

Alexander Sozhenitsyn

NEBULA

CHAPTER
ONE

GAVIN'S RING

Miasmal serpents made of mist
Enshroud the towered edifice
Of Highlord Albonitus...

Reality weaves grim ballets
of hide and seek within the maze
of labyrinthine coils...

The phantom fangs would soon devour
A traveller at this dark hour
Who needed **eyes** to see...

THE TRAIL
IS **CLEAR!**
THE ANSWER
WE SEEK LIES
WITHIN THOSE
WALLS!

WITHIN THOSE WALLS ...

TOO MANY QUESTIONS! **DAMN FOG!** EATING HOLES IN MY CITY! HOLES IN MY MIND! I'M GETTING OLD! WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, I COULD BUY THE ANSWER TO ANY QUESTION, AND TAKE IT FROM THOSE THAT WOULDN'T SELL!



QUESTIONS! LIKE YOU, MY PRETTY RING! I OWN MORE PRECIOUS JEWELS THAN ANY MAN IN THE LAND, YET I HAVE NEVER SEEN YOUR LIKE! EVEN MY LOQUACIOUS COURT JEWELER COULD PUT NO NAME ON YOUR SUBSTANCE! ARE YOU MADE OF SOLID LIGHT?



ALBONITUS IS NOT AN EVIL MAN! RATHER HE IS A SELFISH MAN, WITH WELL-PLACED BLIND SPOTS!

HIS REIGN HAS NOT BEEN A KIND ONE FOR HIS PEOPLE!

YET THIS IS AN EASY QUESTION, WHEN COMPARED TO THE RIDDLE OF MY CHIEF ASSASSIN! MERE DAYS AGO, KREEGAR COULD SPLIT A HAIR WITH A DAGGER'S THROW ACROSS MY COURT!



NOW HE CAN'T HIT HIS MOUTH WITH A SPOONFUL OF MUSH!

GUARD! IS THERE NO WORD OF THAT USELESS WITCH?

YES, HIGHLORD! SHE HAS JUST BEEN SEEN ON THE ROAD BEFORE THE INNER COURTYARD!



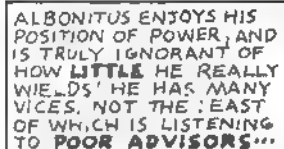
DOES M'LADY GRETCH RIDE A SNAIL IN HER HASTE? REMOVE THE COURT FOOL TO AN ANTE-ROOM, THEN USHER THE WITCH IN!



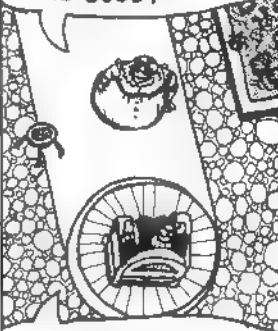
NO SENSE IN SHARING THIS EXQUISITE TOY WITH THAT FAT TOAD!

ALBONITUS ENJOYS HIS POSITION OF POWER, AND IS TRULY IGNORANT OF HOW LITTLE HE REALLY WIELDS! HE HAS MANY VICES, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS LISTENING TO POOR ADVISORS...

AH, I SEE EVEN YOU, MY ELOQUENT SOOTH-SAYER, ARE RENDERED **SPEECHLESS!** A SLAVE MERCHANT TRIED TO SELL HIM BACK TO ME EARLY THIS MORNING!



GOOD EVENING, HIGHLORD! I CAME LIKE THE WIND AT YOUR SUMMONS! I TRUST YOUR HEALTH IS GOOD?



'TIS ROTTEN, AS ALWAYS THIS TIME OF YEAR, AS YOU WELL KNOW, GRETCH! BUT IF PAST YEARS ARE ANY INDICATION, I SHALL SOON **MIRACULOUSLY** RECUPERATE! **GUARD!** BRING KREEGAR IN!

QUELL! THE STENCH OF QUELL'S TOUCH IS BEYOND DOUBT! WHY DOES HIS FOUL HAND ENTER INTO THE GAME AT THIS POINT?



WHAT COULD TURN ONE OF THE MOST FEARED BLADES IN THE LAND INTO A DROOLING IDIOT?



HAVE A GUARD FETCH ME A HANK OF KREEGAR'S HAIR! THE **MYSTIC VAPORS** WILL TELL US ALL!



DODDERING FOOL! WOULD THAT I WERE NOT FORCED TO ENTERTAIN YOU WITH THIS **MUMBO-JUMBO!**

COUGH! COUGH! ISN'T IT FOGGY ENOUGH OUTSIDE? MUST YOU FILL MY CHAMBERS WITH YOUR **CHOKING VAPORS?**



SILENCE! AS I CAST KREEGAR'S HAIR INTO THE FLAMES AN IMAGE FORMS...

NEBULA!

ALBONITUS! THIS IS NOT MY DOING! SEIZE THEM AT ONCE, AS YOU VALUE YOUR THRONE!!

GUARDS!!
ARREST THE INTRUDERS IN THE NAME OF ALBONITUS!!

AND KILL THE CAT!!

IN THE MIDST OF SUDDEN CHAOS, THE THREE NEWCOMERS POOL THEIR MINDS TOGETHER AS ONE ... AND ACT!

THE GUARDS ARE PARALYZED IN MID-LEAP, SWORDS HALF-DRAWN, SHOUTS DANGLING HALF-FORMED ON THEIR LIPS...



HIGHLORD ALBONITUS IS PETRIFIED INTO A GRANDIOSE STATUE, MOUTH AGAPE IN MID-COMMAND.



IF A LOOKING GLASS WERE PLACED BEFORE HIM, HE MIGHT EVEN SEE THE RIGHT QUESTIONS TO ASK!

GRETCH'S FACE IS A FROZEN MASK OF HATRED, FRINGING ON FEAR AND DISBELIEF A CURSE CAUGHT ON THE TIP OF HER TONGUE...



NEBULA! NEBULA! BUT I SAW HER DIE! AND THE BRAT AND THE CAT! IT CANNOT BE!!

IT'S DONE! THEY ARE IMMOBILIZED! CAN YOU HOLD THEM BY YOURSELF, INCUBUS?

YES, BUT WORK QUICKLY!



HERE IS THE ONE WE SEEK, MOTHER! BUT SOMETHING IS WRONG!

IT'S THE TOUCH OF QUELL!! HIS MIND'S A MORASS! IS THERE ANY HOPE INCUBUS?

GRUA... BA... KREE GOVAL...



IT'S USELESS! I'M NOT EVEN HOLDING HIM, FOR FEAR OF SINKING INTO THE WHIRLPOOL OF HIS MIND! WE DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO UNRAVEL HIM, NOR THE POWER WITH GRETCH TO TEND TO!

AH, YES! GRETCH! VERY POOR TIMING ON OUR PART THAT YOU WERE HERE, BUT WE HAD LITTLE CHOICE!

IT IS NOT GRETCH'S MOUTH I FEAR, INCUBUS! UNHINGE ALBONITUS JAWS!

G-GET... THAT DEVIL... CAT-T... OUT OF MY MIND... BEFORE I... GRG!

A FAINT GRIN MARKS THE CAT'S FEATURES AS HE TIGHTENS HIS MENTAL GRIP

>SPUT'E WHAT IS THE MEANING OF TH'S WOMAN? BREAKING INTO MY COURT! CASTING SPELLS ON MY GUARDS! RELEASE ME FROM THIS UNDIGNIFIED POSE AT ONCE!



SORRY, NEBULA! SHE IS FIGHTING LIKE A FURY!

IN BETTER TIMES, THIS WOMAN'S VOICE IS SOFT AND LIQUID, FALLING LIKE RAINDROPS! THE COLD SLEET OF HER WORDS STINGS ALBONITUS' FACE...

HOLD YOUR TONGUE, YOU POMPOUS WINDBAG! ONCE YOU COULD HAVE COMMANDED MY RESPECT, BUT YOU SOLD OUT LONG LONG AGO! I COME TO ASK ONE QUESTION! WHERE IS MY SON?!!



ALBONITUS WAS READY WITH ALL THE RIGHT ANSWERS BUT SHE ASKED THE **WRONG QUESTION...**

YOUR SON? I KNOW NOTHING OF YOUR SON! DO YOU TAKE ME FOR A KIDNAPPER OF LITTLE BOYS?

INCUBUS?

THERE IS NO FALSEHOOD IN HIS VOICE! HE IS JUST A **PUPPET** AND KNOWS NOT WHAT THEY DO BEHIND HIS BACK!

THE **RING**, THEN ALBONITUS' WE SENSE SOMETHING OF GAVIN'S NEARBY! IT **MUST BE HIS RING! WHERE IS IT?**

RING? I KNOW NOTHING OF A RING! YOU ARE BABBLING WOMAN!

HE LIES! IF I WEREN'T PREOCCUPIED, I WOULD **DIG** THE TRUTH OUT OF HIS BRAN WITH **MENTAL CLAWS!**

WE HAVE NO TIME FOR **GAMES**, ALBONITUS! MY SON'S **LIFE** MAY BE AT STAKE WHILE YOU **DANGLE!**

CRESCENT! YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO!

WHAT'S SHE **DOING** TO ME?" MY **ROBE**... IT'S **ALIVE!!** SOMEBODY **SAVE ME!!** **GUARDS!! GUARDS!!!**

ALBONITUS IS SUSPENDED OVER THE COURTROOM POOL LIKE A GIANT CATERPILLAR IN A **VELVET COCOON**...

GRETCH! GRETCH! I PAY YOU A **FORTUNE** FOR YOUR SERVICES! USE YOUR **MAGIC** TO **STOP THEM!! GRETCH!**

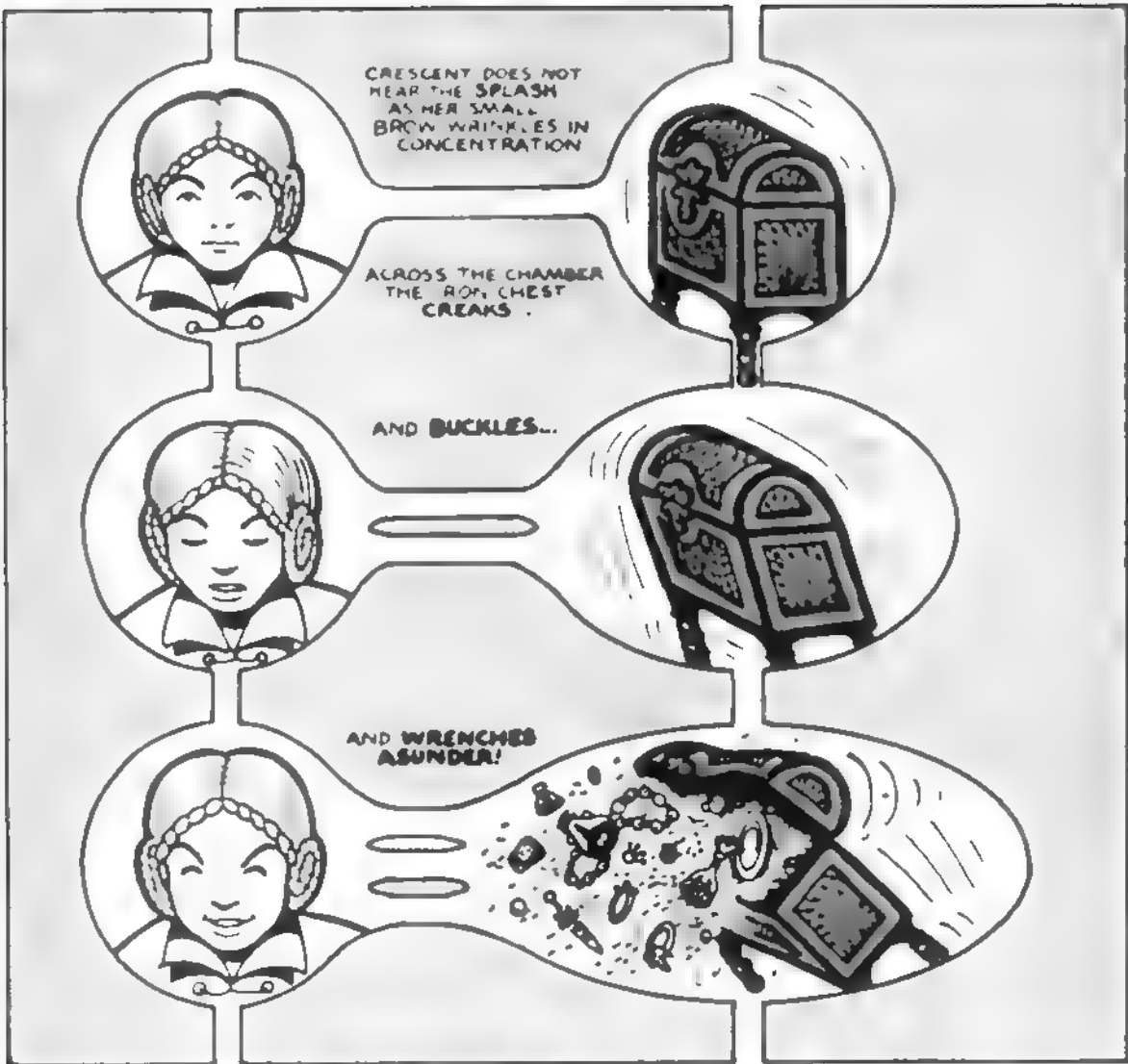
GRETCH CANNOT HELP YOU NOW, H GHLORD! HOW MANY **DUNKINGS** DO YOU NEED?

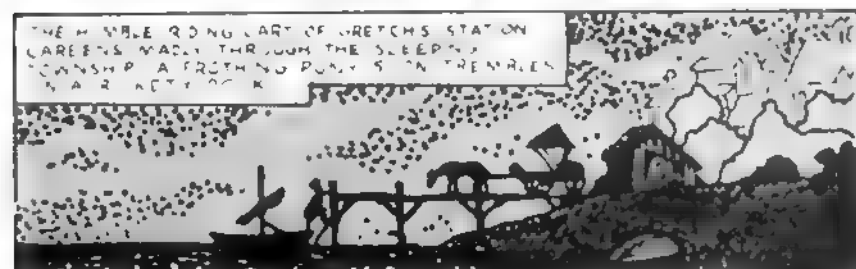
MOTHER THERE IS **NO NEED** I JUST **TOUCHED** GAVIN'S RING WITH MY MIND HE HAD IT WITHIN **IRON** TO **HINDER** MY SEARCH

GOOD GIRL! CAN YOU CALL IT TO ME?

NOT WHILE I'M HOLDING THE **OLD MAN** UP AT THE SAME TIME!

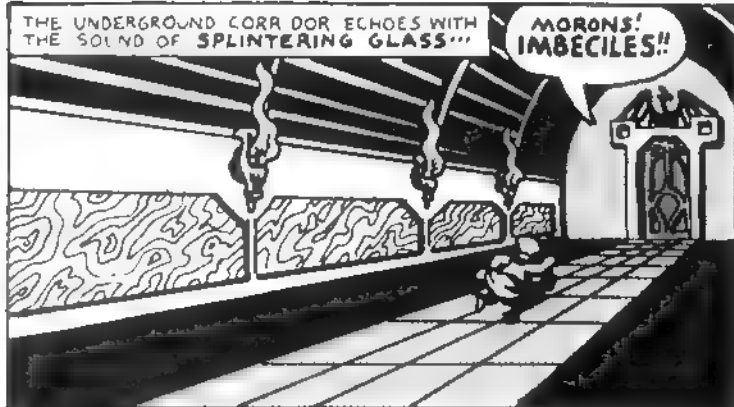
THEN **DROP HIM!** IT WILL TAKE **MORE** THAN A **GOOD DUNKING** TO **CLEANSE** ALBONITUS' **SOUL!**





THE UNDERGROUND CORRIDOR ECHOES WITH THE SOUND OF SPLINTERING GLASS...

MORONS! IMBECILES!!



AFTER A LIFETIME OF SCHEMING AND SUFFERING WE FINALLY CAPTURE GARTH, THE CLANBINDER, AND NOW, ON TOP OF HIS BIZARRE AMNESIA, YOU TELL ME YOU LOST HIM?

PLEASE, MY LADY! WE ARE BUT THE MESSAGE-BEARERS...



MEGALLA! I MUST SPEAK WITH YOU AT ONCE! ALONE!

FOR NEBULA APPEARED, ALONG WITH HER BRAT AND THAT BLASPHEMOUS CAT!

WHAT?! IMPOSSIBLE!!



OF ALL THE BOYS TO PICK FOR OUR NEEDS, KREEGAR KIDNAPPED NEBULA'S SON!

FIRST THE CLANBINDER, THEN NEBULA! HAS THE WHOLE WORLD GONE STARK-RAVING MAD?! ARE YOU SURE YOU WEREN'T FOLLOWED?

HAVE NO FEAR! EVEN MY OWN SHADOW SCARCE STAYED WITH ME!



HOW DARE YOU BRING SUCH WRETCHED NEWS IN THE MIDDLE OF MY BEDTIME SNACK!

WHY ME?

CLASH!

GRETCH! IT'S ABOUT TIME "BEGONE, YOU WORTHLESS CLODS" WOULD THAT WE DIDN'T HAVE TO KEEP THAT FOOL ALBONITUS ALIVE BEYOND HIS TIME, FOR FEAR THEY'D REPLACE HIM WITH SOMEONE COMPETENT! WHAT-EVER THAT FOSSIL WANTED CAN'T COMPARE TO THE CRISIS HERE!

MY NEWS IS ALMOST WORSE! IT IS LUCKY ALBONITUS DID SUMMON ME...

THE CLANBINDER HAS DISAPPEARED FROM OUR HIDDEN PRISON!



MEGALLA! WE HAVE DETECTED AN OUTSIDE PRESENCE IN OUR SANCTUARY! THE ROOM OF POTIONS HAS BEEN TAMPERED WITH! WE ARE SEARCHING CHAMBER BY CHAMBER!

GRETCH!

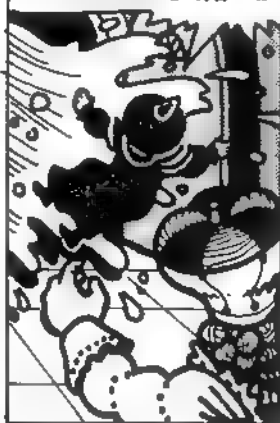


HOO-BOY!

DOUBLE THE GUARD AT EVERY EXIT! GRETCH, TO THE SURFACE! I'LL SEE TO THE LOWER LEVELS!



GRETCH! THE FLOODGATES TO THE UPPER LAKE HAVE ALL BEEN SABOTAGED! SAVE ME!



I'VE GOT YOU MEGALLA! NOW CAST A SPELL ON THIS INFERNAL FLOOD BEFORE WE ARE BOTH DROWNED!



ON COMMAND THE DELUGE FREEZES...

BRRRR! YOU STOPPED IT ALL RIGHT! NOW WE MAY DIE OF FROSTBITE INSTEAD



WHAT DO YOU WANT? I STOPPED IT DIDN'T I? GIVE ME A MINUTE AND I'LL REMEMBER A SPELL TO DISSIPATE IT!

AT A TUG ON THEIR MENTAL LINK, NEBULA PULLS INCUBUS BACK TO HER...

INCUBUS! PRAISE THE GIVER YOU'VE COME BACK SAFELY!

JUST BARELY! THE RUNT'S OWN WRATH SHIELDED ME AT FIRST! I LEFT THEM A DIVERSION TO BUY US MORE TIME!

THEY DID HAVE A STOLEN BAG OF MENORAH'S DUST! I KNOW SHE WOULD WANT US TO HAVE IT IN THIS TIME OF TRIAL!



KREEGAR DID NOT KNOW GAVIN WAS YOUR SON WHEN HE KIDNAPPED HIM! NOR DID GRETCH NOR MEGALLA, UNTIL THIS NIGHT! BUT I BEAR GLAD TIDINGS AS WELL! GARTH IS ALIVE!! HE DID NOT PERISH IN THE GREAT HOLOCAUST AS WE FEARED! MEGALLA HAD HIM IMPRISONED, BUT HE HAS ESCAPED!



GARTH.... ALIVE!! OH INCUBUS! IT'S TOO GOOD TO BELIEVE! CRESCENT, WE HAVEN'T LOST YOUR FATHER AFTER ALL!



THE LONG MONTHS OF IRON CONTROL MELT AWAY INTO HYSTERICAL TEARS OF JOY!



BUT WE WASTE PRECIOUS TIME! WE MUST WORK QUICKLY! LEST MEGALLA REACH GAVIN FIRST! TAKE THE RING, CRESCENT, WE MUST LEARN ITS TALE!



SHARED ENERGY AMPLIFIES THE CHILD'S BUD DING POWER!



GARTH... GARTH! HAVE I REGAINED MY HUSBAND ONLY TO LOSE MY SON? NO!! IT MUST NOT BE!

THE RING BEGINS TO GLOW IN HER HANDS...

THEN RISES UP AND SPINS SLOWLY IN THE AIR...



EXPANDING WITH EACH ROTATION...



UNTIL ANOTHER
T ME ANOTHER
PLACE, CAN
BE SEEN

This young
lad will fll
Gretch's bl!
SILENCE HIM!

Stop lively, men
Our buyers DON'T
like to be kept
waiting!

Ah, you
RECOVER, boy! Do not
fear, we shall SOON part
company, at that OUTCROPPING
ahead!

That's a
pretty RING you're
wearing, lad! You WON'T
be needing it where YOU
are going STOP SQUIRMING!

FAST! TWO MEN
AGAINST ONE YOUTH!
GAVIN WAS STILL
UNCONSCIOUS WHEN
THEY CARRIED HIM
DOWN TO THE
SUBTERRANEAN
WATERWAYS! HE
WONDER HE COULD
GIVE US NO
WARNING!

THE FOOL! LITTLE DID HE
KNOW THE POWER OF THIS RING,
NOR THE LIVES ITS TAKING
MAY COST!

THAT SOULLESS
CHANTING IN THE
DISTANCE ARGOT'S
DARK BOATMEN!
GAVIN WAS TAKEN
TO THE INFAMOUS
RED BUTCHER!!

I hear them
COMING Row
FASTER, men
if you value
your SOULS!

EVEN
KREEGAR
FEARED THEM
YET HIS
FEAR NOW
COMES FROM
SOMETHING
ELSE!

A
huge
SHAPE
EMERGING
out of the
deep We're going
to CAPS! ZE

AT THIS POINT KREEGAR
LOST HIS MIND! THE
RING CAN TELL US NO MORE!

THE STORY **ENDS!** THE RING IS BUT A RING
ONCE AGAIN! AND GAVIN IS IN
ARGOT'S DIABOLICAL HANDS!!

BUT WHAT SO
TERRIFIED
KREEGAR
IN THE END?

QUELL!!
IT HAD
TO BE
QUELL!

AND THE CAT'S
VOICE DRIPS
WITH VENOM!

SO THE TRAIL STOPS
WITH A **DEAD-END**
CLUE! ARGOT COULD
BE IN ANY ONE OF
A HUNDRED DARK
HOLES! YET WE CAN'T
TAKE THE TIME TO
SEARCH THEM ALL!

NOT QUITE, INCUBUS!
QUELL IS THE ANSWER!
ALTHOUGH HE WAS
NEARBY, HE WOULD NOT
INTERFERE WITH ARGOT'S
MEN! BUT HE WOULD
KNOW WHERE THEY TOOK
GAVIN. THERE ARE FEW
SECRETS UNKNOWN TO
QUELL DOWN IN THE
SUNLESS SEAS!

FSSSSST!! NO, ROSANNA. QUELL WOULD **ONLY**
HAVE RETURNED KREEGAR AS BAIT TO LURE US
TO HIM. DO YOU SO SOON FORGET GARTH'S ARM,
LOST TO THAT ANCIENT SLIME IN ONE OF
HIS DEADLY GAMES?! YOU MUST NOT GO!!

YOU KNOW
THE STORY OF
THAT GAME
INCUBUS! WHY
HE PLAYED
AND WHY HE
LOST "YOUR"
LIFE WAS NOT
THE ONLY
THING HE
BOUGHT SO
DEARLY
THAT DAY!

AS YOU SAY YOURSELF WE
HAVE **NO TIME** AND **NO**
ALTERNATIVE! STAY HERE
AND GUARD CRESCENT WHILE
I GO TO QUELL!

NO ROSANNA!
IF YOU **MUST**
GO THEN WE
ALL GO!

THE
DANGER
IS TOO
GREAT!

IS THE DANGER
OF SPLITTING OUR
FAMILY **FARTHER**
APART ANY
BETTER, MOTHER?

I'M SORRY!
YOU ARE
BOTH RIGHT!
WE WILL
FACE QUELL
TOGETHER!

CHANNEL YOUR
ENERGY TO ME!
THE WAY IS
LONG AND I
WILL NEED ALL
OF MY STRENGTH
FOR QUELL!

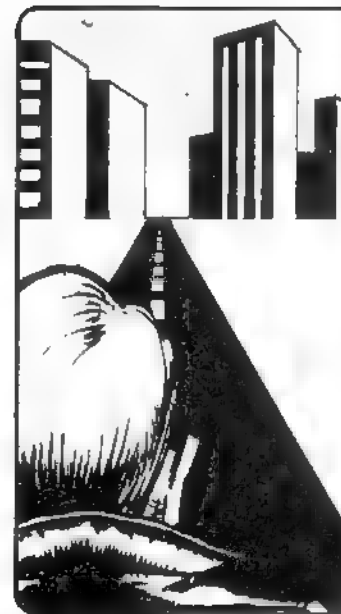
FEAR OF DEATH!

© 1978

MICHAEL T. GILBERT²⁰ & DOROTHY BUCHER

Finished Art

Concept/Layout



A Soft And Gentle Rain.

© 1978 Michael T. Gilbert 29



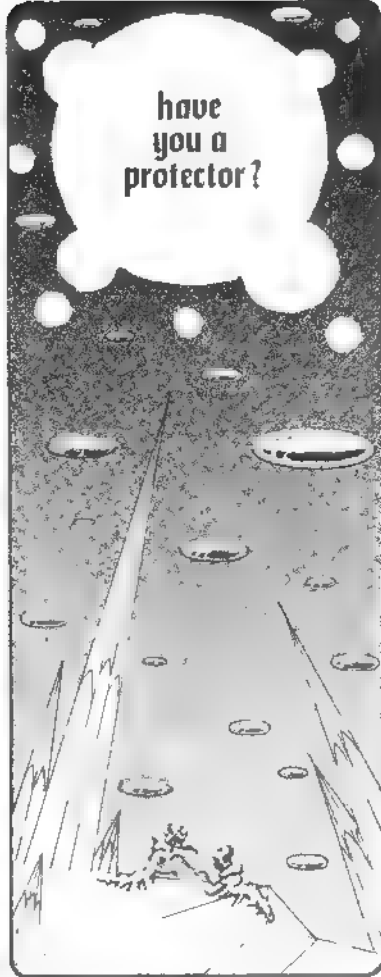
the
"no-more"
rains.



the
more"
ns.



have
you a
protector?

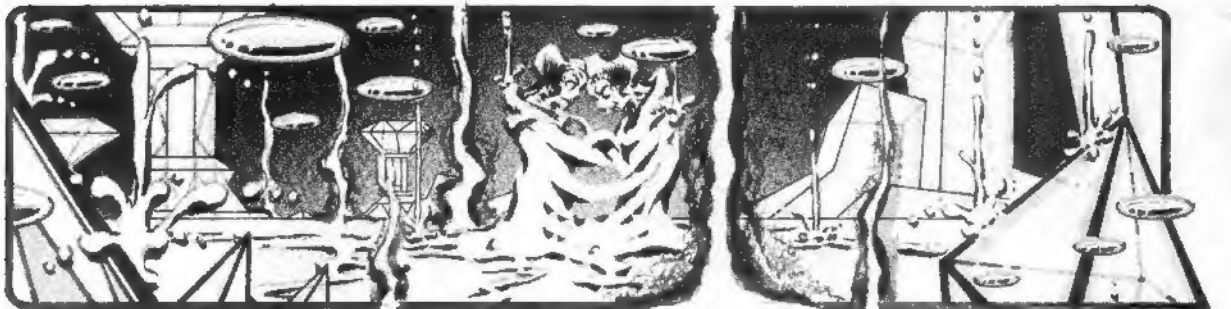
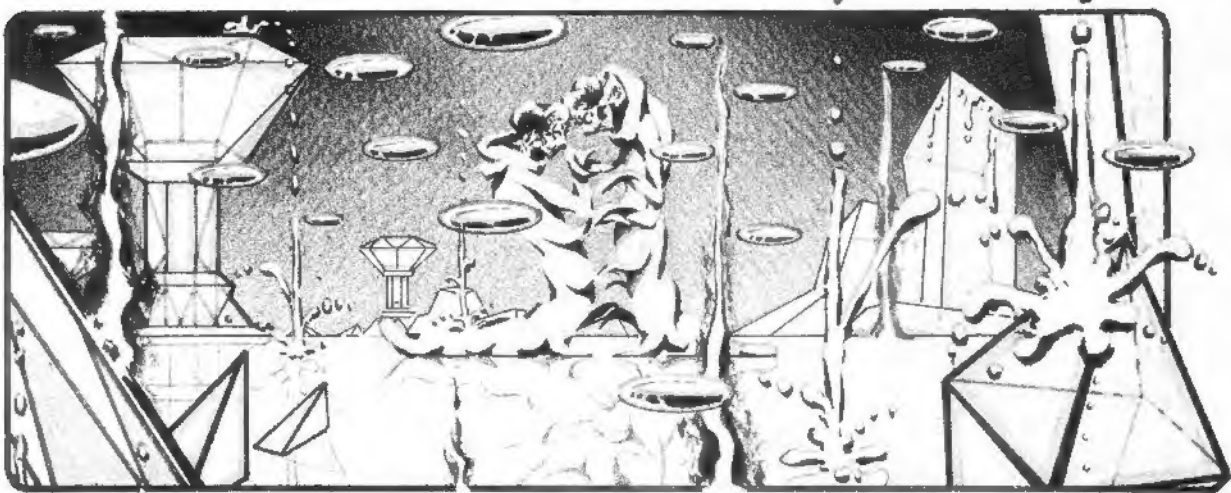


protector?



no.





LETTERS

Dear Mike,

I'm writing concerning your new magazine, *IMAGINE*, and your entire Star* Reach Productions line. I just purchased *IMAGINE* #2 and am not at all displeased with it. This even though "Black Crow", "Days of Future Past", "Drug Friends of the Martian Moon" and "Encounter at the Crazy Cat Saloon" were throwaways... and one more, "Speed", should never have been published. The reason I do not feel cheated is because of Craig Russell's magnificent "The Avatar and the Chimera". It is simply beautiful. The color makes it a richly textured classic. Looking forward with great eagerness towards the second part.

The other stories I mentioned are throwaways for one very good reason: they are all pointless. Their publication in no way adds to the stature of your magazine. Even the one that did make me think a bit ("Black Crow") was ruined because of its silly ending. "Speed" was done with much more inspiration before by Harlan Ellison, as you point out in your editorial. Gene Day's artwork in this one is mediocre, making its printing even more suspect. Also in *ARIEL* #3, Al Williamson does a color graphic-story adaptation of "Along the Scenic Route". Refer Mr. Day to that publication.

IMAGINE #1 was much better both art and story wise, except for the somewhat childish Marshall Rogers color section.

I must take you to task for printing the same cover on both front and back, and printing the idiotic ad gags on the inside back cover. A dollar-fifty is a lot to pay for the same covers, so I suggest either wraparounds or separate covers (perhaps even one page vignettes in color!) Your ads in the back of the books look something like the stuff dreamt up by Madison Avenue. How about more art or editorial (a letter column)?

I expect to see a great improvement in *IMAGINE* #3 and *STAR*REACH* #13. Both have seemingly limitless potential (if only you would exert a bit more editorial control and judgement. Don't go by the "if I understand it, it must be Art" syndrome so well described by Spider Robinson in the February, 1978 *ANALOG*. And many of your past stories were not understandable. I believe you're getting better in that respect, though — there haven't been any of those type in either issue of *IMAGINE* or in *STAR*REACH* for awhile.

Now you must concentrate on throwing out the stories that only have pretty pictures and not other redeeming value. Almost all the art you publish is good, but most of your stories are pointless and do not make me or anyone think.

As I see it now, Star* Reach Productions may soon grasp the sun it holds dear. I hope so....

David, R. Schellhase
576 Euclid Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94708

(Well, as you can see, we've taken one of your suggestions almost immediately: editorial content on the inside back cover. I've resisted doing this for quite awhile, since we receive so few letters, but now I'm hoping that by offering some reinforcement (your name in print, hey!) we'll get some more.

Also, you'll note that this issue has original back cover art. The idea of running the front cover again ~~was~~ copy was an idea that didn't work. I hope not to do it again unless forced. —MF)

Dear Mike Friedrich & Star* Reach Productions,

Although I don't write to comics, Craig Russell's "Avatar and the Chimera" has excited me to take typewriter in hand. It's AMAZING! Though not perfect, it is a stunning comic strip. I keep looking at it in amazement — just studying it, and marveling over how well it holds together, minus any dialogue. I'm no fan of textless strips — but I was impressed — and I mean IMPRESSED!

Let me just drool over what impressed me in the Russell piece. First, the lettering — a beautiful indication of what is classy in Russell — a fluid line that is contained and disciplined enough to maintain a "classic" look. Would Smith ever have the freedom to write "And The" in that cartoony style? Yet it's a proper touch, for it seems to indicate a lack of pretension in the strip to follow.

I'm at a loss as to where to continue... let's talk about colour! The tones all point to a watery feel, all encouraged by rain, pools of water, and the white-veined blue of the temple (which suggests watery reflections). Water is the perfect Symbolist element (many works pictured submerged scenes and drownings — one of the most most effective being Delville's "Treasures of Satan"), and Russell uses it to great effect.

I especially liked the objects in Russell's landscape: the mirrors (the watery effects there re-called Cocteau's *Orpheus* film), the Gaudi staircase (Gaudi was the perfect art nouveau architect), oh — and that little demon-figure that slams the doors — just beautiful. The thing to bear in mind is that though Russell may borrow or suggest, it is all in complete harmony with his style. Russell has an established style, and within that style is all manner of elaboration and cross-references.

Actually, it'd be silly to continue praising panels, as just about all of them have something classy to offer. But I must praise that underwater sequence when the Avatar enters the Chimera's watery world — Ahhh, beauty! A marvelous scene that suggests waves, worlds, and new experiences. Here, alas, lurk my only two criticisms: the panel where the Avatar and the Chimera face each other is a bit weak and unsuggestive, and the creature that looms up and knocks the Avatar silly is a bit too close to comedy — but just makes it. But these are minor. This story offers so much as is so rich in imagery and expressiveness that I can live with these minor flaws.

Russell is a needed breath of fresh air in a field laden with pretension and stuffiness. His is the right touch to make symbolist imagery vital, and not mere mimicry. Here's hoping a long life to him, and may his strips multiply!

Robert Schaffer
3-07 Lambert Road
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410

BACK ISSUES

STAR*REACH #1 thru #14.....	\$1.50 @
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BOX 2328
BERKELEY, CA 94702





Sir Real's

UNDERGROUND COMIX CLASSIX

Imagine #3

Published August 1978

1st Edition

Star*Reach Productions

\$1.50

44 pages

Print run of 10,000 copies

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Stories:

- 2 - Editorial
- 3 - The Spider Thread
- 7 - Songs To Aging Children Come
- 17 - Ersatz
- 19 - The Avatar And The Chimera, Part 2
- 27 - Nebula, Gavin's Ring, Chapter 1
- 38 - Fear Of Death
- 40 - A Soft And Gentle Rain
- 43 - Letters

Artists:

- Mike Friedrich (editor) - 2(e)
- P. Craig Russell - 1, 19-26
- Masaich Mukalke - 3 - 6
- Mary E. Gordon - 3-6(l)
- Mike Vosberg - 7-16
- Paul Levitz - 7 - 17(dialog)
- Lee Marrs - 17-18
- Mickey Schwaberow - 27-37
- Michael T. Gilbert - 38-39(finished art), 40-42
- Dorothy Bucher - 38-39(concept, layout)
- Steve Lalaloa - 44

Comments:

Says "First Printing August 1978" on page 2.
Someone wrote on the cover logo with a red ballpoint pen. <gm>